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The situation in the Middle East

Question of Palestine

United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources

Letter dated 13 January 2009 from the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

In my capacity as Chairman of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement, I have the honour to write to you in connection with the grave situation in the Gaza Strip.

The members of the Non-Aligned Movement have been following with grave concern events on the ground and strongly condemn the military aggression being carried out by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Gaza Strip in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

I would like to acknowledge the attention that you and your team have devoted to this matter and your intensive efforts and declarations with a view to securing an immediate cessation of military activities and alleviating the humanitarian situation of the people of Gaza.

I wish to reassure you that you can always count on the support of the Non-Aligned Movement and we stand ready to undertake any action that you consider necessary in support of your efforts.

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I have the honour to transmit herewith a copy of the statement issued today by the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement on the escalation of the Israeli military aggression against the Gaza Strip (see annex).

Your attention is drawn to the paragraphs of the statement on the role of the General Assembly and the actions that the Movement believes the Assembly should take.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly under the following agenda items: (15) The situation in the Middle East; (16) Question of Palestine; (29) United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East; (30) Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories; (38) Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian People in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources.

(*Signed*) Abelardo **Moreno Fernández**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations
Chairman of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement

Annex to the letter dated 13 January 2009 from the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Statement by the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement on the Non-compliance by Israel with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) and the Escalation of the Israeli Military Aggression against the Gaza Strip

The Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement met at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 12 January 2009 and considered the grave situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly in the Gaza Strip, as a result of the massive military aggression that Israel, the occupying Power, continues to carry out against the Palestinian civilian population.

The Non-Aligned Movement reiterates its strong condemnation of the massive military aggression being carried out by Israel against the Palestinian civilian population in the besieged Gaza Strip.

The Non-Aligned Movement condemns in the strongest terms Israel's blatant disregard of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), which was adopted by the Council on 8 January 2009 and which calls, inter alia, for an immediate ceasefire, and Israel's flagrant defiance of the repeated calls from the international community for a complete cessation of military activities.

The Non-Aligned Movement calls for the immediate implementation of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), including the call for an immediate ceasefire leading to the withdrawal of Israeli occupying forces from Gaza, as well as for measures to address the pressing humanitarian and economic needs of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, including through the sustained and permanent reopening of the Gaza border crossings, fully in accordance with the terms and provisions of resolution 1860 (2009), to ensure unimpeded provision of humanitarian assistance and other essential supplies and goods and to facilitate the movement of persons to and from the Gaza Strip.

The Non-Aligned Movement reiterates that this brutal Israeli military aggression against the Palestinian civilian population in the Gaza Strip constitutes a grave breach of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, and is causing considerable suffering among the Palestinian civilian population, fuelling the cycle of violence and threatening international peace and security as well as the fragile peace process between the two sides.

The Non-Aligned Movement reiterates its deep regret over the considerable loss of innocent lives and injuries to Palestinian civilians as a result of this brutal Israeli military campaign as well as over the extensive destruction of homes, properties and infrastructure in the Gaza Strip. In this regard, the Non-Aligned Movement expresses its deepest condolences to the grieving Palestinian people as they mourn the loss of more than 900 Palestinians, including more than 280 children, and the more than 4,000 Palestinians injured, including more than 1,200 children, by the occupying forces in the Gaza Strip.

The Non-Aligned Movement once again expresses its grave concern at the widespread suffering and trauma being visited upon the Palestinian civilian

population and at the deepening human tragedy and humanitarian disaster unfolding in the Gaza Strip as a result of continuing military actions by Israel, the occupying Power, against the civilian population as well as its ongoing blockade of Gaza, obstructing the movement of persons and goods, including of humanitarian personnel and vital humanitarian supplies, including of desperately needed food, medicines, and fuel, into, out of and throughout the Gaza Strip in collective punishment of the civilian population.

In light of this continuing illegal and unacceptable situation, the Non-Aligned Movement once again urgently calls for an immediate cessation of all military activities and violence. It demands that every effort must be made to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to cease this aggression and to scrupulously abide by all its obligations under international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. In this regard, the Movement demands that Israel unconditionally comply with its obligations as the occupying Power under the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949.

Moreover, in light of the dire situation being faced by the Palestinian civilian population under Israeli occupation and aggression in the Gaza Strip, the Non-Aligned Movement reiterates its calls for the immediate provision of protection for the Palestinian civilian population in the Gaza Strip in accordance with the relevant provisions of international humanitarian law.

The Non-Aligned Movement expresses grave concern over the serious difficulties being faced by medical and rescue workers in the Gaza Strip in evacuating wounded civilians in need of emergency medical treatment because of Israel's continued targeting and obstruction of ambulances and rescue workers, severe shortages of medical supplies and the poor state of repair and lack of the necessary equipment to respond to this critical situation, which is exacerbating the suffering of the civilian population. In this regard, the Non-Aligned Movement strongly condemns Israel's targeting and killing of United Nations humanitarian personnel, including United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) personnel, who work tirelessly to deliver humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people, and calls upon the occupying Power to respect international law and the Convention on Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations.

The Non-Aligned Movement stresses the need for the international community to intensify and coordinate its efforts to bring this crisis to an end and take such steps as may be necessary to support and promote the peace process as well as to ensure respect for international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law, the key to a peaceful settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole, as the only path to ensuring a lasting peace in the region.

The Non-Aligned Movement supports all the diplomatic and political efforts and initiatives that are being undertaken at the international and regional levels to address this crisis, including by the United Nations system, stressing once again that there is no military solution to this crisis or to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a whole.

The Non-Aligned Movement supports and calls for the full implementation of the Human Rights Council resolution on the grave violations of human rights in the

Occupied Palestinian Territory, due to the Israeli military attacks against the occupied Gaza Strip, adopted on Monday, 12 January 2009, and the speedy dispatch of the independent international fact-finding mission called for therein to investigate violations of human rights and of international law by Israel.

The Movement will actively consider all possible actions designed to ensure that the crimes against the civilian population in Gaza are investigated and that all those responsible for such crimes are prosecuted. In this regard, the Non-Aligned Movement stresses that criminal justice must take its course.

The Non-Aligned Movement further stresses that the General Assembly, the most democratic and representative body of the United Nations, is duty bound to respond to the concerns of the international community with respect to the crisis situation in the Gaza Strip as a result of the Israeli military campaign and add its voice and weight to that of the Security Council in calling for an immediate ceasefire and calling on the occupying Power to abide by its obligations under international law, including humanitarian and human rights law.

In that context, the Non-Aligned Movement supports the convening of the resumed tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly at the earliest possible date and requests the President of the General Assembly to begin forthwith the relevant consultations.

The Non-Aligned Movement stresses the urgency of continued efforts by the international community and relevant United Nations bodies and specialized agencies to effectively address the many political, humanitarian, socio-economic and security ramifications of this crisis.

At this critical time, the Movement calls upon the international community to make a special effort to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, including by dispatching emergency assistance to meet the most pressing needs of the population of Gaza. The Movement also calls upon the international community to pledge the necessary assistance to rebuild the infrastructure of Gaza at the earliest feasible juncture, and the economy of Gaza as well as the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Movement stresses that the international community must invest in the economic recovery and development and rebuilding of the infrastructure and capacity of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, thus helping to usher in an environment that is conducive to the resumption of the peace process.

The Movement reaffirms its commitment to a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and sovereignty in an independent State of Palestine, on the basis of the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

New York, 13 January 2009